



Ontario  
fish and wildlife  
Review

Vol. 13, No. 3-4, 1974



Wildlife are in debt to wetlands, and we are in debt to Andy Houser for a factual account of where wetlands and wildlife are going. There's the odd ray of sunshine amid the encircling gloom, but . . . See Page 7.



Mike Buss, lately of Sioux Lookout, picks up the nine-year-old trail of Don Simkin to salute the stately caribou and identify caribou country, Page 3. His cover photo shows the splendid work in caribou hide of J. M. Hunter and his family of Winisk.



Alex Smith takes note of the growth of the waterfowl tournament at Darlington from a standing start three years ago. It's a great event for dogs, kids, hunters and non-hunters.  
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# Ontario fish and wildlife Review

Vol. 13, No. 3-4

Fall-Winter, 1974

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*The goal of the Ministry of Natural Resources is to provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and resource development for the continuous social and economic benefit of the people of Ontario, and to administer, protect and conserve public lands and waters.*



Ministry of  
Natural  
Resources

Hon. Leo Bernier  
Minister

Dr. J. K. Reynolds  
Deputy Minister

### A VANISHING RESOURCE

As documented elsewhere in this issue, Ontario's remaining wetlands may be considered the last bastions of wildlife production in agricultural southern Ontario.

For several years, it has been the policy of the Ministry of Natural Resources to preserve high-quality wetland wildlife habitat in Ontario.

Wetland habitats must be *preserved* so that the many animal species which depend on them can be *conserved*. It is simply a matter of keeping these special lands available as they are, for use by all animals, including man. But, in fact, this is no simple task for even with a policy of preservation, the wheels of man's "progress" are ever encroaching on these oases of undeveloped land.

From a recent survey of marshes along the lower Great Lakes shoreline, a surprising number of wetlands appear to be in jeopardy. On the Lake Ontario shoreline, alone, there are several outstanding examples. The Second Marsh at Oshawa may be dredged for a harbour development; the marsh at the mouth of Highland Creek is being destroyed by industrial development; the remains of the Rattray Marsh may be subject to filling for further housing development; and two marshes near Wesleyville will have a hydro generating station almost on top of them.

This constant chipping away by development at our remaining wetlands poses a serious threat to the survival of many forms of wildlife in agricultural, southern Ontario.

Everyone who enjoys nature — birdwatching, waterfowling, fishing, or just pottering about — is aware of the large marshes such as Long Point and the marshes of Lake St. Clair. But what about the small marshes — five acres here, twenty acres there, which are usually known only to local residents? These, too, are important in the over-all scheme of wildlife production, and there is usually no doubt that they are dear to the hearts of those lucky people who live nearby.

For the sake of wildlife production and the common enjoyment of wildlife in southern Ontario, we cannot afford to trade off any more of our wetlands in favour of development as we have been doing for the past sixty years. Now, even the tiniest marshes are important.

There are cynics who say that the loss of wetlands is inevitable. Not so! Within an enlightened land-use planning process, we can accommodate many interests. Citizens must voice their concerns within this process. It is here that our precious wetlands will be lost or saved.

# INTROSPECT

*A personal opinion  
not necessarily endorsed by  
the Ministry of Natural Resources*

## THE DEATH OF A DUCK

by Ben Legouffe  
*Naturalist, Timmins District*

A duck smothered in oil, immobilized and starving, is huddled behind the rocks, awaiting death. In the chill of the coming night, it will die slowly and with no sound to mark its passing.

There is a small pool close by, and in it various kinds of flotsam wash back and forth as small waves ripple in from the lake. It is all so different from the only other place the duck has known — the clean, windswept water to the north.

Under the matting oil, if only our eyes could see it, is the perky, bright form of one of the most noisy and communal of the diving ducks — a male oldsquaw.

The duck was hatched less than half a year ago in a nest concealed at the edge of a clump of dwarf willows, close by a pond set in the Arctic tundra.

Here in the protective cover, the mother hid the brood from the gulls and skuas that constantly winged over the nesting territory in search of prey. When the day came that

she led the ducklings to the pond, several other ducks joined with her to form a convoy for protection; and there, in the land of the midnight sun, the young oldsquaw learned to dive in the naturally stained waters of the tundra pond and snap up aquatic insects and snips of grasses and pondweed.

The oldsquaws are noisy birds, noted for their chuckling, incessant chatter. Since the species is one of the most abundant of the Arctic ducks, there was an almost constant din as our duck learned to fly above the bleak landscape and gain strength for the migration to come.

Then, as the days grew shorter in that northern land, the migration urge ran through the noisy throng, and flocks of birds lifted, wheeled and headed toward winter quarters. They flew south, and our duck was one that sped south to the open waters of the Great Lakes.

By now their protective dull covering of summer had given way to the bright brown and white of winter. The adult males, in particular, presented a dashing sight as, with long, thin tails extended, they frolicked in the turbulent air.

Resting and feeding in cold, silent lakes, the flocks moved ever south, and at last into man's domain.

In the dawn's grey light, the migrating birds jink and flare with alarm at the boom of guns below. The danger passed, the birds come in sight of their wintering quarters — the protected waters of one of the Great Lakes.

The early morning sun is glistening and dancing on the water as, scudding in low up the wind, a flock dips and plunges into a smooth slick of oil. In an instant, the bright feathers are coated with the clogging oil that drips from frantically beating wings and burns the eyes like fire.

As our duck struggles, the insidious oil smothers the soft down of its body and poisons its system as it desperately tries to preen. Soon it can do little more than twitch and shake its head. It floats helpless, low in the water, and is carried slowly towards its end behind the small rock on the beach.

Who knows how, where, or when the oil sludge was dumped into the lake? It might have been an accident — the wrong lever pulled and a tank emptied down a waste pipe rather than channelled into a settling pool. It could have been part of the oily wastes that pour down some of our rivers. It may even have been bilge pumped from a ship.

In this scientific age, human identification



Author Legouffe leads nature trail hike in Kettle Lakes Provincial Park.

— Photo by C. Biggar



Aerial view of caribou herd. (See back cover.)

## CARIBOU — SYMBOL OF THE FAR NORTH

*Report and photos by M. E. Buss, Fish and Wildlife Specialist  
The Leslie M. Frost Natural Resources Centre*

MOOSE and deer occupy the limelight in the minds of Ontario hunters, tourists, naturalists and land-use planners, while the caribou remains in the wings as a neglected member of our wildlife heritage. Even the Ministry's own publication, *Ontario Mammals*, so beautifully illustrated by the renowned wildlife artist, Glen Loates, makes no mention of what I feel is the most stately member of our deer family.

The caribou is a true inhabitant of the northern wilderness and does not appear on Highway No. 401 as does its white-tailed cousin. Caribou are obscured by several hundred miles of boreal forest and muskeg, and except for some trappers from scattered Indian villages across Ontario's far north, a few bush pilots and some Ministry staff, few people have seen caribou. Few, perhaps, are even aware that they exist in Ontario.

The species in Ontario is the woodland caribou, a larger, darker (chocolate brown), and less gregarious animal than the barren ground caribou which roams northern Manitoba, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories.

In the late 1950s and 1960s, Biologist D. W. ("Don") Simkin stimulated and pio-

nneered much of the research which contributed to the bulk of information now existing on woodland caribou in Ontario. Since that time, there have been only sporadic aerial surveys of caribou and some liaison with our northern Indian trappers who rely on caribou for sustenance.

Ontario's first white explorers, and of course the early native population, were quite familiar with the woodland caribou. Although recorded information about caribou abundance is scarce, most investigators believe that they once roamed over much of Ontario, north of the French and Mattawa Rivers. Archaeological evidence and a few authentic written accounts attest to this opinion.

The area bordering the Great Lakes from the French River to Thunder Bay accounted for most of the documented observations of caribou prior to the 1900s. The relatively large amount of exploration and travel which took place in these areas made encounters with wildlife more numerous than in the interior.

With the encroachment of permanent settlements, the caribou retreated and by the 1930s only remnant populations persisted



*Caribou calf with new ear tag . . . and a splendid rack. Photos by D. W. Simkin.*





*The caribou is valued highly by native people for its meat and hide. The latter is more durable for its weight than moose hide which is heavier and more porous.*

along the north shore of Lake Superior. Logging, fires, and land clearing destroyed their habitat and restricted their range. Inland, scattered herds were observed more frequently, and to the present, caribou are only occasionally observed near Marathon, White River and Terrace Bay, and on the Slate Islands in Lake Superior.

Woodland caribou prefer several species of ground and hanging lichens which grow in association with mature coniferous forests. The lichens are especially important food items in winter while some woody browse, grasses and herbs are used in summer. Any disturbance, be it fire or logging, to such forest stands may reduce its attractiveness to caribou. The relationship of fire to the production and maintenance of lichens, however, has been under study for several years by Canadian Wildlife Service biologists, and is as yet not completely understood.

Caribou continue to exist in islands of suitable habitat throughout the precambrian shield's boreal forests, but it is the vast undeveloped tracts of the Hudson Bay Lowlands which harbor Ontario's most significant herds.

In the mid 1960s, Simkin estimated the population of caribou in Ontario at 13,000. His estimate was based on several years of systematic aerial surveys which covered most of the Hudson Bay Lowlands. Since that time, two mid-winter aerial surveys have been conducted in the Lowlands, one in 1971 and the other in 1972. The results of these surveys indicate some interesting changes in caribou numbers and their use of the habitat.

During the 1971 survey of an 8,500-square-mile portion of the Severn and Winisk River drainages, 929 woodland caribou were observed. The herd sizes ranged from two to 98 animals and averaged 27. Excellent flying and tracking conditions prevailed during the survey, which was conducted in early March. A survey in 1967 had resulted in the sighting of 477 caribou.

At first glance, one might conclude that the population has almost doubled. A multitude of factors influence the results, and we cannot automatically attribute the difference to a true increase in the population. Weather conditions, snow depth, observer ability and fatigue are just a few of the variables influ-

encing the reliability of a survey.

Compounding these problems are the distribution and habits of the caribou. Large tracts of the Lowlands showed no sign of caribou, while some small areas appeared heavily used as indicated by the profusion of tracks.

The nomadic habit of caribou increases the amount of searching required to locate the animals. If snow has not fallen in the previous few days, the tracks of a herd may lead the searchers on a seemingly endless zig-zag pattern over 20 miles or more. Caribou are constantly on the move. Deciphering the cobweb pattern of old and new tracks and finally locating a herd is tedious work for pilot and crew.

For all these reasons, it is difficult to compare the results of one survey with those of another. Nevertheless, it is likely that an increase has occurred in this particular area, but additional surveys would be required to determine the extent of the increase.

An analysis of the distribution of caribou in relation to their habitat was a second phase of these recent surveys. All observations of caribou were recorded on a map of the Hudson Bay Lowlands which identifies the common plant communities present. The analysis was conducted to document if the caribou distribution was random or if certain plant communities were used more than others. We did not expect the distribution to be random but were attempting to quantify which vegetation types caribou seem to prefer. The analysis showed that the caribou showed positive association with six of twenty-five plant communities present on the survey areas.

The six vegetation types identified were Bog Island Muskeg, Sub-Arctic Raised Bog, Spruce Island Muskeg, Tamarack Fen, Wet

Raised Bog and Open Bog Forest on Raised Bog.

To completely comprehend these types, one would require the Glossary of Terms as presented on the Ministry's map, No. 3269, Vegetation Patterns of the Hudson Bay Lowlands by P. Brokx, D. N. Bates and D. W. Simkin. For example, Bog Island Muskeg, the single most significant type, is described as follows: "Round and elongate areas of bog covered by open bog forest with a thick carpet of lichens. The bogs are separated by potholes and fens that are patterned by parallel strings of peat." The key phrase in this description in relation to caribou is "... a thick carpet of lichens . . .".

Although only a small portion of the entire Lowlands was surveyed and analysed by the aforementioned technique, we can expect that whenever these vegetation types occur they will be of importance as winter habitat for caribou.

Relatively few animals occupy the mature forest and muskeg niche where woodland caribou are found. The caribou's habitat is a precarious one. It is subject to devastation by fire, logging and other human encroachment. Hopefully, the identification of the plant communities mentioned above will help wildlife managers and land-use planners to predict the impact of future land development on Ontario's woodland caribou range.

In this age of development, we owe the woodland caribou, that symbol of the far north, the protection of its habitat by making a concentrated effort to collect the information necessary for its proper management.

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*Fresh-water cod (ling, burbot) is higher in protein value than salt-water cod.*

## SUCKER — A SPORT FISH!

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Many anglers condemn suckers as egg feeders. Are they really? When following yellow pickerel (walleye) to their spawning beds in spring, they come themselves to spawn and at that time do not feed. One researcher examined 100 stomachs of white sucker taken on lake whitefish spawning grounds at spawning time and found no eggs. Another investigator reported no eggs in a detailed study of the food of this species.

White suckers are often very abundant in warm lakes and, when under 12", constitute a major food item of predators such as northern pike, muskellunge, basses, burbot and yellow pickerel. The sucker's white, flaky flesh is deliciously sweet. It makes good soup and chowders. When the fish is taken in cold water, it is tasty, fried in butter.

The sucker is not highly favoured commercially and has an untapped potential as a sport fish in Lake Nipissing. Dr. W. B. Scott and Dr. E. J. Crossman of the Royal Ontario Museum claim that suckers can be taken still-fishing with a small hook and a variety of baits, including doughballs. They also say that suckers "will strike small spinners and wet flies and provide good sport."

— C. R. Jorgensen, Biologist, North Bay District



Aerial view of Duffin Creek. Photo by A. A. Wainio.

## WETLANDS — DOWN THE DRAIN

*Condensation of a Report by A. M. Houser  
Supervisor of Planning Section, Wildlife Branch*

**S**OUTHERN Ontario wildlife is largely dependent upon wetlands for its existence. Already, in southern Ontario, 50 per cent of the original wetlands have been lost to agriculture and other land developments. Land draining is the major cause contributing to the disappearance of wetlands.

What is land drainage? Generally, it consists of digging drainage ditches and laying tile to remove water from the surface and top few inches of the soil. Practices may vary, and in some cases dykes must be built and pumping stations established. When marshes are drained, wildlife habitat is destroyed as the water table drops. In wooded areas, drainage is almost invariably accompanied by land clearing. Along ditches, the banks are usually kept clear of vegetation. Again, habitat is lost and wildlife disappears from the immediate area.

Effects are not restricted to the immediate drainage area. Draining results in rapid removal of water from the land which, in turn, may result in increased prevalence of flooding downstream. The meanders, pools and obstructions in "normal" streams cause turbulence and flow reductions. With increased run-off from drainage projects, either the

impediments to flow must be removed (by means of channelization), or flood waters must be impounded in reservoirs. In addition, drainage may result in low ground-water levels and decreased stream flow in summer.

In the past, wetlands were regarded as liabilities rather than assets. Farmers and engineers viewed them as obstacles to agricultural or industrial development.

In an attempt to increase production and efficiency, farmers frequently drained swamps and marshes. On rural lands, developers drained or filled wetlands to make properties more attractive to home buyers. Too many people regard wet areas as unsightly and wish to remove what they consider a blot on the landscape.

Land drainage must be examined as to the over-all costs and benefits to society as a whole. Included in this must be the wildlife-oriented benefits.

The potential benefits of land drainage from an agricultural standpoint are obvious. But recently the public has become more aware of the benefits of undrained wetlands to groundwater recharge, stream flow conditions, water quality and wildlife. In the past

FROM PROTOZOA  
WILDLIFE NEED



*Wesleyville Marsh, threatened with Hydro power station. — Photo by L. Whistance-Smith*



**BOG IS BEA**



*Two views of Port B showing beaver lodges — Photos by L. Whistance-Smith*



*Aerial view of Second Marsh, Oshawa, threatened with harbour dredging.  
Left: two autumn scenes, including muskrat house. — Photos by A. A. Wainio*



this awareness has not been apparent.

In the Lake Erie region, onion beds at Point Pelee were once prime waterfowl habitat. Marshes on the south shore of Lake St. Clair, where duck hunting was popular fifteen years ago, are now sites of marinas and cottages. At Turkey Point, agriculture is expanding in the lowlands at the expense of wildlife. On the Walpole Island Indian Reserve, several thousand acres of marsh have been drained and the land converted to agriculture. In Mosa Township, Middlesex County, the largest contiguous forest in the district (a tract supporting a great variety of flora and fauna) is being drained by an increasing number of deep, open ditches which are nullifying one of the main values of the forest — water conservation.

Typical of the endangered wetlands is Calton Swamp, a valuable and unique area in Elgin County. It is the creation of beaver which are uncommon in the area, and it is a home and haven to thousands of birds and animals. Wood ducks use it extensively in the fall as a roosting area. Although the swamp has not created any obvious drainage problems, attempts at drainage have been made. Fortunately, these attempts have been defeated by the perseverance of beaver.

The Ministry of Natural Resources is in the process of buying this swamp at considerable cost — to save a valuable wildlife area from a project which should never have been started.

An area of even greater importance to wildlife, and particularly waterfowl, has already been lost. Prior to 1955, Lake Smith was approximately three miles long by one and three-quarter miles wide, and with a depth of from three to four feet. It was drained for agriculture and is now only a fraction of its former size. The lake lies in an important section of the Great Lakes bird migration flyway and was the only marsh providing excellent cover and food for large numbers of wildlife in the 150 miles stretching between the Port Elgin - Arran Lake marshes in Bruce County and the Walpole Island and Paincourt marshes on Lake St. Clair.

This wildlife resource has now been lost. And for what purpose? Much of the marsh is apparently mediocre for agriculture because of the soil conditions and high water table, so that today cottage lots along the canal banks are being offered for sale.

In the Central Region where the highest demand for outdoor recreation in the Province occurs, Stroud (Innisfil) and Cooks-

town Swamps have been, or are being, drained. Large areas of land have been cleared and drained in Randall and Adjala Swamps for sod farms and market gardening. Areas of aspen lowlands are being drained in the Mt. Albert Wetlands for market garden crops. Around Mud Lake, several areas, which are highly productive for grouse, deer and woodcock, are being drained for peat removal, as are duck and muskrat marshes in King, Uxbridge, West Gwillimbury and Scott Townships. Most of the Holland Marsh was once prime wetland until modern technology permitted its drainage.

One of the few remaining wetlands left intact in southern Ontario is Minesing swamp, over 13,000 acres of wet low-lying land composed of marsh, fields, cedar swamp, waterlogged woodlands and meandering streams. This vast natural complex is situated in Simcoe County, only 45 miles north of Toronto. Extensive flooding of the swamp during the early spring creates a 9,000-, to 10,000-acre lake which attracts migrating ducks and geese. If an average depth of two feet is considered, this represents a water storage of 20,000 acre-feet, about half the total storage capacity of Conestoga Dam or Belwood Lake.

A drainage canal scheme once provided some fair agricultural land in the Minesing area on the north-east fringe. However, this drainage system has recently become clogged and ineffective, and a proposal to improve it has been considered. Any scheme entailing the complete and continuous drainage of Minesing Swamp is not feasible because of the extreme costs involved. Fortunately, a comprehensive land-use plan is now being drawn up for the Swamp.

One of the most serious drainage problems in the Province at present are those projects affecting an area of about 550 square miles in the southeast corner of Grey County. A great variety of wildlife habitats are encountered throughout the area. The wooded swamps serve primarily as cover for deer while red-osier scrublands provide winter browse. Approximately 32 deer yards are located here, and deer hunting is popular. The area is also important for many other wildlife species, including woodcock, ruffed grouse, ducks and furbearers.

In addition, and perhaps more importantly, the Pine, Mad, Noisy, Boyne, Nottawasaga, Saugeen, South Saugeen and Credit Rivers all have their headwaters in the region. These rivers contain much of the best trout water in southern Ontario includ-



*A close-up of Cranberry Marsh.*



*Inside Tiny Marsh. Photos by A. A. Wainio.*

ing important rainbow trout fisheries. In addition, the wetlands serve as storage areas that reduce downstream flooding and maintain flows and water quality throughout the year. Again, drainage has been started in this area, supported by agricultural agencies, although it has a relatively low capability for agricultural production because of local climatic conditions.

In the Kemptville area, problems have also been encountered. The western end of Alfred Bog, an area which is unique in both vegetation and wildlife, was drained in a not very successful attempt to produce market gardens. In Limerick County Forest, a proposed municipal drain will drain a central marsh that has been recommended as a waterfowl production and recreation area. A drainage scheme for Walford Bog, a waterfowl production area and swamp which provides winter cover for one of the largest concentrations of deer in the area, has been proposed.

The cost of land drainage is high—lowered water tables, increased nutrient loading in the streams, decreased flow in summer, increased flows during peak periods, and increased erosion. If remedial action is taken, the costs of channelization and channel stabilization and reservoirs must be added. In addition to the purely economic costs, the loss of wetlands results in a loss of recreational and aesthetic lands, associated

with which are some of the most important wildlife and fisheries resources in the province.

People are finally realizing that further drainage of wetlands poses a serious threat to wildlife.

Wildlife and wetlands in southern Ontario are almost synonymous. Without the wetlands, the diversity and numbers of wildlife which we have today simply could not exist.

The species that usually come to mind when wetlands and drainage are discussed are waterfowl and marsh birds, the species usually associated with large marshes. Included are ducks, geese, coots, rails and gallinules, herons, bitterns, blackbirds and other marsh songbirds.

But also intimately associated are fur-bearers and other mammals (muskrats, mink, beaver, raccoons and, seasonally, deer), amphibians (frogs, toads, salamanders), reptiles (snakes and turtles), fish (sunfish, crappies, catfish) and a host of invertebrates from protozoans to mollusks and insects. All of these species require specialized habitat and could not exist in any numbers without marshlands as places to feed, breed and rest.

In addition to providing year round habitat for many species, and breeding and feeding habitat for many more, marshes or their edges are stop-over areas for migratory birds and provide them with the quality and quantity of food necessary for their survival through the rigors of migration, and necessary for their physiological well-being during the nesting season.

The future of wetlands and waterfowl as forecast at a number of international and national wetland conferences is dark.

"The Number One problem of North American waterfowl management is, and continues to be, the accelerated loss of basic waterfowl habitat — marshes, sloughs, overflow lands, swamps and all other types of aquatic waterfowl habitat."<sup>1</sup>

But wetlands include more than open marsh areas and waterfowl habitat. They also include tamarack swamps, cedar, aspen and hardwood swamps, sedge meadows, alder and willow swales, and stream and river flood plains — in fact, most of the other areas of important wildlife habitat. Almost all wildlife, from white-tailed deer to cottontail rabbits, from grouse to cardinals and chickadees, are dependent upon these wetlands at some time during the year. As a result, the drainage of a swamp results in the

loss of wildlife not just in the swamp itself, but in much of the surrounding upland.

In the *Conference on the Management of Wetland* in November of 1959, C. H. D. Clarke stated: "I can show you several hundred acres of rich Ontario farmland that furnish wonderful pheasant shooting each fall, but wouldn't produce enough birds to fill a knapsack were it not for several areas of cattail and brush, in all less than five acres, that furnish cover enough to hold fifteen or twenty hens and enough roosters to go around, over a winter such as last winter. There are thousands of such little wetlands all over southern Ontario, each one of which has the effect of making the surrounding fertile area available to game where it otherwise would not be or would be of little use."

"The only game and fur-bearing animals independent of swamps or marshes are squirrels and skunks, and . . . groundhogs. I wish you would show me a deer in Old Ontario that is independent of a wetland — or a shootable population of grouse or pheasants or woodcock. In winter, the Hungarian partridge heads for the swale, and so does the European hare - -."

Clarke's discussion was associated with game species, but it applies to all wildlife.

Wetlands are important to almost all people involved in outdoor recreation. Naturalists, birdwatchers, photographers, hunters, trappers, fishermen and canoeists are all, in one way or another, dependent upon the continued existence of Ontario's wetlands.

In Ontario there is a great demand for the wildlife-oriented recreational opportunities provided by wetlands. More than 85 per cent of Ontario people live south of the Laurentian Shield where less than one per cent of the area is suitable marshland for wildlife recreation. Unfortunately, the supply is limited and is being lost at an accelerating rate. Yet, under the present system, public money is being made available to land-owners to drain those same marshes that are an important source of recreation.

In a major international conference in 1962 on *The Conservation and Management of Temperate Marshes, Bogs and Other Wetlands*, Peter Scott stated, "We cannot yet, thank goodness, level the mountain chain nor melt the icecaps of the Poles. But the great marshes are desperately vulnerable to the machinations of the 'practical' man — there are all too few of these wetlands left."

It's worse today.

<sup>1</sup> Salyer, J. C. 1956. Gains and losses in the waterfowl game. *Trans. N.A. Wildl. & Nat. Res. Conf.* 21:100-113



## SPORTSMAN'S WATERFOWL TOURNAMENT

*Report and Photos by A. W. Smith  
Extension Biologist, Central Region*

FOR the third year in a row, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources have co-operated in sponsoring a Sportsman's Waterfowl Tournament at Darlington Provincial Park, just east of Oshawa on the Lake Ontario waterfront. Through competition and demonstration, the tournament reveals the many skills used by waterfowlers. The sponsors hope that, through viewing these skills, the general public will gain a better understanding and appreciation of the ancient field sport of waterfowling.

The Darlington tournament has been successful in bringing together hunters and non-hunters, competitors and non-competitors.

The marsh shooting contest, the major event, stresses "putting it all together" in the marsh. Contestants compete as pairs. They must row out, set their decoys, row to a blind, fire shots at clay birds thrown over their blind, and row back to shore. Contestants are marked on the natural appearance of their decoys and on their own dress, conduct, speed, and accuracy in hitting the "birds". Any one wishing to be eligible for the Grand Championship must compete in this event.

In the duck-calling contest, contestants are judged on their ability to simulate the natural calls used to attract waterfowl to within firing range.

The ability to make good decoys and present them naturally is a difficult but important skill. Decoys are judged for likeness to species, ease of transport, durability, appearance on the water, and workmanship. Contestants are encouraged to produce 'working' decoys rather than 'mantle' decoys.

Hunters pride themselves on handling a firearm skilfully and strive to improve their form and accuracy. To test their skill, a standard 16-yard trapshooting contest is a fourth event. Contestants attempt to break 25 clay targets with four points deducted from the possible 100 for each 'bird' missed.

To be a good sportsman and obey the Federal and Provincial Acts and regulations, it is vital that the waterfowler know his birds and other marsh wildlife. To test his knowledge, a waterfowl identification contest is staged. Here, contestants are expected to identify 25 species of waterfowl from brief glimpses of slides or actual duck wings.

The tournament would not be complete without the contest for retrievers. In the first

round, dogs are required to complete a simple retrieve. Qualified dogs are then required to retrieve dummies on land and water. Dogs are marked on steadiness and their ability to find and retrieve. This event has been popular with both competitors and non-competitors.

Altogether, 3,500 people attended the 1974 tournament. Each year, the show has been made more attractive and interesting. Two large tents are filled with wildlife paintings and displays on waterfowl management, wilderness survival and hunter safety. This year, the variety included the participation layout boat, a frog-jumping contest, a retriever demonstration, and a 200-yard, hip-boot race over land and marsh.

In excess of 133,000 Ontario residents purchased migratory bird hunting permits in 1973. The majority were primarily interested in hunting waterfowl. This indicates the interest in this sport in Ontario — a sport which requires more than simply pointing a gun and squeezing the trigger.

Waterfowl hunters are a fraternity with a long tradition. They readily tolerate the trials of severe weather and long hours afield. The Sportsman's Waterfowl Tournament is an attempt to relay to the public the dedication, skills and knowledge needed by a waterfowler to be successful in the sport.

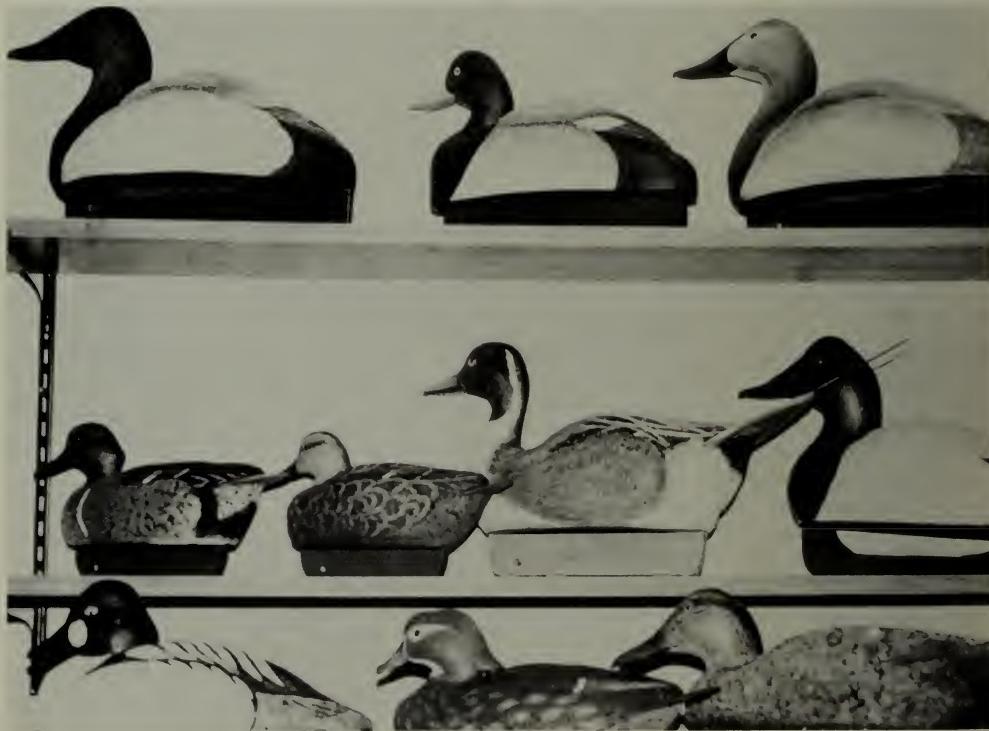


*A future sportsman "calls" ducks.*



*Sportsman tries out layout boat.*

*Below: a variety of decoys.*





*Top: trapshooting contest. Below: a young hand shows its cunning on a decoy.  
Photos by L. M. Mayeda.*





*Top: a popular attraction at tournament. Below: D. R. Johnston, left, and J. B. Dawson test decoys. Photos by L. M. Mayeda.*

## LETTERS IN REVIEW

*Readers of 'Review'*  
are invited to set forth  
their views in these columns

### MARKED COWBIRDS

Over 7,100 brown-headed cowbirds were banded and color-marked in west-central Kansas during 1974 as an aid in studying their movements and hopefully to determine their place of origin. The birds were marked with red, yellow or green plastic leg streamers.

Fall and winter observations revealed 27 individuals from ten locations in Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas and Mexico. However, data from spring and summer movements are needed. Observers should report location and date of sighting, sex of bird, and color of leg streamer.

1974 completes the final year of banding for this study. The number of observations has been very encouraging. With your assistance, I am very optimistic about reports of spring and summer movements of color-marked cowbirds.

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### INTROSPECT — from Page 2

with wild creatures is frequently scorned as anthropomorphic, and many would doubt that the young duck experienced any great emotion over its fate. But, it is a victim of water pollution, and maybe it can help to open our eyes to the disastrous effects that man can have on the environment of all creatures.

In the bright of a chill winter day, a child finds the duck stiff and ugly in death, and the child weeps, as should all men.

# DUCK OUT TO DARLINGTON

Darlington Provincial Park

9:00 a.m., Sunday, September 7, 1975

Sportsmen's Waterfowl Day has changed its name and appearance. The new emphasis is on the demonstration of waterfowl shooting sports for the benefit of the audience as well as the competitors.

- Shooting Events for Everyone
- Canadian Duck Calling Championships
- Retriever Show and Demonstrations
- Waterfowl Identification Tests
- Waterfowl Management Demonstrations
- Decoy Head Carving Contests
- Decoy Contest
- Wildlife Art Display
- Food from the Wild
- Bullfrog Jumping Contests

SEE YOU SEPTEMBER SEVEN

## COLOUR-MARKED CANVASBACKS

Canvasbacks, marked with colourful plumage dyes, have been released at key migrational concentration areas in the North Central states by wildlife research biologists of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The purpose of the program is to determine the migrational dispersal and wintering distribution of canvasbacks staging on the Upper Mississippi River.

Readers are requested to report any observation of colour-marked canvasbacks to:

David L. Trauger, Wildlife Biologist  
Northern Prairies Wildlife Research Center  
P.O. Box 1747, Jamestown  
North Dakota 58401, U.S.A.

Observers are asked to state their name and address; the date, time and location of the observation (be specific); and the colour of bird (be descriptive). If possible, include information on the activity of the bird, the size of the flock, and the species of ducks seen with the marked bird.

